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26 February 2018

Mr Kelvin Wilkins
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Wilkins

Short inspection of Eccleston Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in April 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Your appointment and that of your deputy headteacher have strengthened leadership of the school. The harmonious and calm atmosphere that you have created encourages pupils to thrive. You lead with skill and determination. You have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are taking appropriate steps to further improve pupils' progress.

You have responded well to the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Since then, the quality of teaching has improved. You and your leadership team have made well-considered appointments to strengthen staffing. Additionally, you have improved the use of assessment information. This means that teachers give pupils work which matches their abilities, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have identified that similar accurate use of assessment information in subjects such as history, geography and art would further improve standards.

In response to the previous inspection, you have improved the leadership and teaching of mathematics. Teachers now give pupils frequent opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills. They use classroom displays to improve pupils' mathematical vocabulary and support learning. As a result of improvements, standards in mathematics have risen and pupils achieve well. The assessments at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 showed that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved at least as well as other pupils nationally.

Governors share your high ambitions for the school. They are regular visitors and know the school well. Governors make sure that their knowledge is up to date by attending regular training sessions. They use their range of skills to provide support and challenge in equal measure.

Morale in the school is high. Staff appreciate your supportive and enthusiastic leadership. Teachers welcome the opportunities you provide for them to improve their skills by observing other teachers and attending training. Staff work well as a team. Teachers and teaching assistants deliver engaging lessons which meet the varied needs of pupils.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Those who spoke to me at the start of the day or who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, said that leaders have improved the school. They appreciate the changes that you and your deputy headteacher have made, including involving the wider community in upgrading the school environment. The school is now an attractive and well-resourced place for learning. Parents told me that they are proud of the school.

Pupils share parents' very positive view of the school. Those pupils I spoke to during the inspection said that they enjoy coming to school because lessons are fun and they learn lots of new things. They enjoy the many leadership opportunities that you give them, including in the school council and eco council. Year 6 pupils take pride in staffing the school office at lunchtimes. You teach pupils to be tolerant of others and to respect and value each other's differences. As a result, pupils said that bullying does not happen. They were confident that teachers would quickly deal with any incidents of misbehaviour.

Safeguarding is effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding arrangements are thorough and of high quality. They carry out statutory checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. Leaders have taken effective actions to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place in which pupils can learn. Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider community.

Through regular training, staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. They are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Records relating to pupils' welfare are appropriate and meticulously kept. Leaders have ensured that the appropriate monitoring and filtering arrangements are in place for the school's internet connection.

Inspection findings

- The inspection focused on a number of key lines of enquiry, the first of which was how well children learn in the Reception Year. In both 2016 and 2017, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below the national average. I wanted to see what actions leaders have taken to address

this. I found that you have taken effective steps to improve teaching and learning in the Reception Year. You have strengthened staffing and improved the learning environment. During my visit to the classroom, I saw that the highly skilled staff give children plenty of carefully planned opportunities to develop their skills. For example, children are shown how to use practical equipment to support their understanding of number. I found that children are very engaged in their learning. Children's work shows that they quickly acquire early English and mathematical skills. As a result of recent improvements, children now make good progress from their starting points. You are monitoring children's progress carefully to ensure that recent improvements continue to have an impact.

- The second key line of enquiry was how well boys are achieving in writing. This was because in 2017 boys did not achieve as well as girls in writing at the end of both key stages 1 and 2. During my visits to classrooms, I saw that both boys and girls have excellent attitudes to learning, including in writing. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and teach writing skills successfully. They plan engaging and exciting opportunities for pupils to write across different areas of the curriculum. For example, last term, pupils across the school produced high-quality pieces of writing during a design technology week. Lessons focused on an alien spaceship crash landing on the school playground. As a result of improvements in teaching writing, pupils, including boys, make good progress.
- The final key line of enquiry related to whether pupils are receiving a broad and balanced curriculum. Those pupils that I spoke to said that learning across the curriculum is interesting and challenging. Visits and visitors enhance pupils' learning experiences. For example, during my visit, a Buddhist monk joined Years 1 and 2 to teach pupils about meditation as part of their religious education. Through virtual reality technology, teachers bring learning to life in different subject areas. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to explore Salvador Dali's paintings in detail as part of their art topic. I found that leaders have planned an engaging and interesting curriculum which develops pupils' skills across different subject areas. However, leaders have not put in place a system to evaluate how well pupils achieve in subjects such as history, geography and art. You have identified this as a way of improving how teachers plan their lessons to match pupils' abilities and improve pupils' learning.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- improvements to teaching and learning in the Reception Year are sustained and result in a higher proportion of children achieving a good level of development
- improvements to the school's systems to track pupils' progress in subjects such as history, geography and art enable teachers to plan with greater precision to promote pupils' learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lancashire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Stevens
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and a group of teachers, including middle leaders. I also met with three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. I spoke to a representative of the local authority and to the virtual school headteacher. I met with eight pupils from key stage 2, and spoke informally with other pupils during lessons. I visited all classes with you, where I observed teaching and learning, looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils. I also heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.

I took account of 45 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, including free-text responses. I also considered the responses of six staff and 85 pupils to Ofsted's online questionnaires. I looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour logs, teachers' performance management arrangements and pupils' personal education plans. I also evaluated safeguarding procedures, including policies to keep pupils safe, safeguarding checks and attendance information. I undertook a review of the school's website.